

South Africa | Sport & Entertainment

Absa Cape Epic connects the world's premier mountain bike race to global fans

Client profile

The Absa Cape Epic is the most televised mountain bike race in the world and the only eight-day mountain bike stage race classed as hors catégorie ("uncategorized") by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI). It's a highlight on professional racers' calendars and also attracts passionate amateurs who want to test themselves against the environment and the world's best mountain bikers.

The grueling race must be completed by both members of a two-person team with only 680 teams allowed to ride the race each year. Every edition follows a different route, leading aspiring amateur and professional mountain bikers from 49 countries around the world through roughly 700 untamed kilometers of unspoiled scenery and up 16,000m of climbing.

"It's not the physical challenges that set a mountain biking stage race apart. They're the basic reason for riders participating. What separates the ordinary from the exceptional is the ability to connect the world to every second of the race."

Kevin Vermaak,
Absa Cape Epic Founder

Summary

The Absa Cape Epic is designed to be the only one of its kind in the world. However, the remote, often harsh African settings – seminal to its uniqueness – create an extreme test of the infrastructure needed to allow the world to interact with the race. We created a solution that connects everyone involved in the race in real time. With thousands of local and international riders using social media and hundreds of journalists from around the world reporting online, the race is a global event. Connectivity has no limits. It allows every part of race organization, from emergency services to catering, to deliver an exceptional service to competitors. The media can delight their audiences. Friends and families can interact with loved ones throughout the race.

Vision

Connecting an iconic race to the world

The Absa Cape Epic brings mountain bikers from across the world together for a unique and grueling experience. But what puts this race in a category of its own is the 700km of remote, isolated terrain and potentially extreme weather conditions that riders experience.

Most of the route doesn't have infrastructure for connectivity, with even mobile signal for calls not guaranteed. The race organizers needed a connectivity solution that would allow riders, UCI officials, the venue operating center, organizers, caterers, medical personnel and media to connect with each other and the rest of the world.

The medics must be able to communicate with hospitals and send treatment information if necessary. Media coverage needs to support real-time streaming, as well as allowing commentators to report from anywhere on the course.

The connectivity solution needs to be stable enough to function under all weather conditions, offer enough bandwidth to livestream the event, and secure to protect personal information.



Which technologies?

- Secure LAN and WLAN
- Location-based services
- Collaboration tools

Which services?

- Consulting and Professional Services

Which partners?

- Cisco

“What Dimension Data does is embedded in the race.

We build what we deliver to the riders on their solution.”

Kevin Vermaak,
Absa Cape Epic Founder

Technology plays a crucial role in driving business outcomes, which is why 85% of the Fortune 500 companies come to us. Find out how our full range of capabilities will empower your people, strategy, operations and technology to achieve your business modernization and transformation goals.

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Transformation**Providing connectivity wherever it's needed**

One of the Absa Cape Epic's best-kept secrets is the next year's race route. Since the route changes each year it requires new infrastructure to ensure that all corners of the race route are covered.

Once the infrastructure is in place, the network allows devices to connect to the network, allowing people to engage with each other and the outside world. These devices can range from IoT devices for tracking vehicles and riders to facilitating live media broadcasts and letting everyone share the excitement of the race through social media posts.

The ability to deliver this has seen the race's YouTube views increase by 20% and Instagram followers grow by 14% between 2021 and 2022.

The race location means that fans can't come see the action for themselves, with technology putting them in the thick of the action. Helicopter footage is combined with footage from ebikes and traditional camera positions. The ebikes allow experienced riders to follow racers without disrupting the racers' experience with all the footage streamed in real time. The network also allows riders to share their personal experiences from their GoPros and smartphones.

The race experience keeps evolving. From connecting commentators reporting live from the course to live streaming the entire race coverage, on-screen data nuggets derived from analytics and data (such as the heart rate) for professional riders. We also supported the first fully independent live-streaming broadcast production as well as testing the delivery of personalized digital rider content to racers.

Results**Providing an immersive and connected race experience**

Despite the Absa Cape Epic's remote location, connectivity allows fans to watch the race, experience the action in real time and see where riders are on the route, where they finish and what their ranking is. Riders can upload their own statistics to assess their performance on the go.

Enabling 100% uptime

The success of the live stream relies on seamless connectivity. The Absa Cape Epic streams live from the ebikes, motorbikes and the helicopters. In 2022, 116 countries watched the live stream of the race with a total of 1 million views.

Improving safety

Knowing where racers are on the route allows the organizers to assist racers who have trouble on the route and send medics to their location. The mobile race hospital is connected to the Mediclinic hospital network, enabling world-class field triage and aftercare treatment. Medical histories are kept on record so that riders who compete again are given appropriate attention.

Real-time support

The Dimension Data team provide support on the ground allowing them to resolve technical issues fast. The network also allows experts to assist from anywhere in the world if needed.

